

## <Articles>A Note on Because-Clauses

著者	Kanetani Masaru
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## A Note on *Because*-Clauses \*

Masaru Kanetani

### 1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the subject *because*-clause construction (henceforth, the SB construction) and the counter-inferential *because*-clause construction (henceforth, the CI construction), exemplified in (1a, b), respectively:

- (1) a. Just because John has cigarettes in his house doesn't mean that he smokes. (Hirose (1991:22))
- b. Just because John has cigarettes in his house, it doesn't mean that he smokes. (Hirose (1998:601))

Hirose (1991, 1998) closely examines these two constructions and points out that there holds a paraphrase relation between them. The constructions have two properties in common (cf. Hirose (1991, 1998), Bender and Kathol (2001), Hilpert (to appear)).<sup>1</sup> First, the meaning of the constructions is an inference denial, which is described as follows:

- (2) A particular situation should not necessarily make you come to a particular conclusion. (COBUILD<sup>4</sup> s.v. *because*)

Second, the *because*-clause is presupposed. To see this, observe the following:

- (3) The fact that we can talk (and cats can't) seems so *obvious* that it hardly bears mention. But just because *it's obvious* doesn't mean it's easy to explain... (Nakau (2002))

In (3), the content of the *because*-clause, *it's obvious*, is contextually presupposed, as is clear from what is conveyed by the first sentence. Hirose (1998:601) notes that the counter-inferential *because*-clause is also presupposed.

In this article, we will consider how the SB/CI constructions correlate with other constructions where *because* is used.

### 2. Comparison with the Reasoning Construction

In this section, we compare the SB/CI constructions with what we call the reasoning construction (henceforth, the R construction), which is exemplified in (4):

- (4). It has rained, because the ground is wet.

In (4), the *because*-clause expresses the premise from which to draw the conclusion that it must have rained. Sweetser (1990) and Hirose (1991, 1998)

take the inferential relation as a metaphorical causal relation where some sort of knowledge causes a certain conclusion, and describe the meaning of (4) as in (5):

- (5) My *knowledge* that the ground is wet *causes* my *conclusion* that it must have rained.

Hirose (1991, 1998) argues that the SB/CI constructions are similar to the R construction in that the *because*-clause of the former constructions also denotes the premise of an inference. The meaning of (1a, b) can be shown as in (6):

- (6) NEG [John smokes, *because* he has cigarettes in his house].

The negation in (6) denies the entire inferential process of drawing the conclusion that John smokes from the premise that he has cigarettes in his house. That is, the *because*-clause in (6) has the same function as that in (4). Thus, the *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions are functionally similar to that in the R construction.

However, the SB/CI constructions are different from the R construction in that the *because*-clause in the former constructions is presupposed, as we have already seen, while that in the latter is not (cf. Hirose (1991, 1998)). There are two pieces of evidence that the *because*-clause in the R construction is not presupposed. First, it is not possible to prepose the *because*-clause in the R construction:

- (7) \* *Because* the ground is wet, it has rained. (Hirose (1991:27))

It has been claimed that a sentence-initial *because*-clause is generally presupposed (cf. Lakoff (1987), Hirose (1991)). The fact that the R construction does not allow the preposing of the *because*-clause thus indicates that the *because*-clause in the R construction is not presupposed.

Second, as Lakoff (1987) observes, root transformations can apply in the *because*-clause in the R construction (cf. also Hooper and Thompson (1973)):

- (8) a. The Knicks are going to win, *because* who on earth can stop Bernard?

- b. I'm gonna have break fast now, *because* am I ever hungry!

(Lakoff (1987:475))

The *because*-clause in (8a) involves a rhetorical question, and that in (8b) subject-aux inversion. Hooper and Thompson argue that root transformations apply only in asserted clauses. Thus, grammaticality of (8a, b) means that the *because*-clause in the R construction is asserted, unlike that in the SB/CI constructions.

In sum, the SB/CI constructions are similar to the R construction in that the *because*-clause in the three constructions likewise introduces the premise of an

inference. However, this does not entail that the three constructions are identical. The *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions is presupposed, whereas that in the R construction is asserted. Here, a question arises: to what construction is the presuppositional nature of the *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions related? In the next section, we will consider this question.

### 3. Comparison with the Causal Construction

In this section, we compare the SB/CI constructions with the causal construction (henceforth, the C construction), which is exemplified in (9):

- (9) a. Because it has rained, the ground is wet.  
 b. The ground is wet because it has rained.

The C construction has two surface forms as shown in (9). Semantically, it denotes a causal relation, and the *because*-clauses in (9) express the cause of the ground being wet.

As seen in the previous section, the *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions serves to indicate a factual premise from which to draw an inference. By contrast, the *because*-clause in the C construction denotes a cause of a certain situation. In this respect, the SB/CI constructions and the C construction are different. However, this does not mean that they are not related to one another at all. In fact, there is a striking similarity between them.

Recall here that the *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions is presupposed, as shown in section 1. Interestingly, the *because*-clause in the C construction, whether preposed or postposed, is also presupposed, as we will see shortly.

Let us first consider C constructions with a preposed *because*-clause as in (9a). As shown in section 2, preposed *because*-clauses are generally presupposed. Given this general tendency, we can say that the *because*-clause in (9a) is presupposed, too.

Let us proceed to consider C constructions with a postposed *because*-clause like (9b). Observe the following example:

- (10) Sam is not going out for dinner because his wife is cooking Japanese food, but because his uncle George is in town.

(Hooper and Thompson (1973:494))

The sentence in (10) denies the causal relation between the propositions that Sam is going out for dinner and that his wife is cooking Japanese food; the matrix negation ranges over the whole sentence. This is depicted as follows:

- (11) NEG [Sam is going out for dinner because his wife is cooking

Japanese food].

Hooper and Thompson argue that a *because*-clause is always presupposed when it is within the scope of negation.<sup>2</sup> To negate the causal relationship between Sam's wife cooking Japanese food and his going out for dinner, the speaker has to know in advance that Sam's wife is cooking Japanese food. The fact that the postposed *because*-clause in the C construction can be within the scope of negation means that it is presupposed.

In this connection, recall that the *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions is presupposed and is within the scope of negation, too:<sup>2</sup>

- (12) NEG [John smokes, because he has cigarettes in his house]. (= (6))

To sum up so far, the *because*-clause in the C construction, whether preposed or postposed, is presupposed, which parallels with what is the case with the *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions.<sup>3</sup>

There are two pieces of syntactic evidence which further confirm the palarellism among the three constructions. First, the *because*-clause in the three constructions can be modified by either *just* or *simply*:<sup>4</sup>

- (13) *The SB Construction*

- a. *Just because* John has cigarettes in his house doesn't mean that he smokes. (= (1a))
- b. *Simply because* a trajectory is not prompted for by specific linguistic form (formal expression) does not entail that such information is absent.

(Tyler, A. and V. Evans, *The Semantics of English Preposition*, 2003, CUP. p.69)

- (14) *The CI Construction*

- a. *Just because* John has cigarettes in his house, it doesn't mean that he smokes. (= (1b))
- b. Juan, *simply because* B follows A, it doesn't mean that A caused B.  
(<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=03/12/12/1657250>)

- (15) *The C Construction*

- a. He went to college *just because* his parents asked him to.
- b. Don't expect me to marry you *simply because* you're rich!

(Schorup and Waida (1988:95))

Second, the *because*-clause in the SB/CI/C constructions can be nominalized into *because of*:<sup>5</sup>

- (16) *The SB Construction*

Today is a great day for America, in that *the American military* has had

yet another extraordinary victory. But just because of *the greatness of our military* doesn't mean we should just take for granted that the president of the United States can fabricate the truth when taking us to war.

(<http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0307/22/cf.00.html>)

(17) *The CI Construction*

...they open your lunch bag and they look through it, and they don't see any marijuana. And then they close it back up again exactly the way it was, and set it back down on your desk; just because you don't know about it, and just because of that, it doesn't mean that your privacy wasn't violated.<sup>6</sup>

(<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/fallsem98/mootcourt/trans1.html>)

(18) *The C Construction*

The ground is wet because of the rain. (cf. Rutherford (1970))

As easily expected, the R construction does not have these properties; the *because*-clause in the R construction cannot be modified by exclusives ((19)) or nominalized into *because of* ((20)):

(19) a. It has rained, because the ground is wet.

b.\* It has rained, just because the ground is wet.

(20) a. He's not coming to class, because he just called from San Diego.

(Rutherford (1970:97))

b.\* He's not coming to class because of his having from San Diego.

(Rutherford (1970:105))

The *because*-clause in the SB/CI/C constructions is presupposed, and it can be modified by exclusives, and nominalized into *because of*. By contrast, the *because*-clause in the R construction is not presupposed, and cannot be modified by exclusives or nominalized into *because of*. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the two syntactic characteristics are closely related with the presuppositional nature of the *because*-clause of the SB/CI/C constructions. Here, we simply point out this possibility without further comment.

To sum up, the SB/CI constructions are similar to the C construction in the sense (i) that the *because*-clause in the three constructions is presupposed, (ii) that it can be modified by *just* and *simply*, and (iii) that it can be nominalized into *because of*.

#### 4. Summary

The SB/CI constructions are similar to the R construction in that the *because*-clause in the constructions denotes a premise from which to draw a certain conclusion. On the other hand, the SB/CI constructions are different from the R construction and similar to the C construction in that the *because*-clause in the SB/CI/C constructions is presupposed. Thus, the SB/CI constructions are similar to both the R and C constructions; they are characterized as Janus-faced constructions.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> It has also been pointed out the SB/CI constructions must be negative sentences:

(i) a. \* (Just) because John is liked by all the students means that he is a good teacher.

b. \* Because John is liked by all the students, it means that he is a good teacher.

(Hirose (1991:26))

We will not deal with this issue in this paper. For discussions about this issue, see Hirose (1991, 1998), Bender and Kathol (2001).

<sup>2</sup> Note in passing that the *because*-clause in the R construction, which is not presupposed as seen in section 2, cannot be within the scope of negation.

<sup>3</sup> Hooper and Thompson (1973), Sweetser (1990), and Lambrecht (1994) argue that restricted (i.e. commaless) postposed *because*-clauses may or may not be presupposed. We are not further concerned with it here. What is important for our purposes here is that the *because*-clause in the C construction can be within the scope of negation, and that when it is within the scope of negation, it is unambiguously presupposed.

<sup>4</sup> *Just* and *simply* belong to what Quirk et al. (1985:604) call "exclusives." The *because*-clause in the C construction can also be modified by other exclusives such as *only* and *merely* (cf. Kanetani (to appear)), while the *because*-clause in the SB/CI constructions cannot:

(i) a. He likes them *only because* they are always helpful. (Quirk et al. (1985:1071))

b. For those who attend *merely because* they are required to do so, rather than from a genuine interest, the seminar can be a waste of time. (The British National Corpus)

(ii) a. {\*Only/\*Merely} because John is a linguist doesn't mean that he speaks many

languages.

- b. {\*Only/\*Merely} because John is a linguist, it doesn't mean that he speaks many languages.

We will leave this issue for future research. See Kanetanai (to appear) for related discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Note, incidentally, that the nominalized *because*-clauses in (16) and (17), like that in (3), are contextually presupposed, which can be seen from the fact that what is conveyed by them has already been introduced into the preceding discourse.

<sup>6</sup> In (17), although two *because*-clauses are coordinated, the singular pronoun, *it* is used to refer to them. Matsuyama (2001:346) observes that even if two *because*-clauses are coordinated as in (i), the anaphor that refers to them must be singular (cf. also Hirose (1998:597)).

- (i) Just because John hates a rutabaga and just because Mary likes it, {it doesn't/\*they don't} mean that they don't get along well together.

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Doctoral Program in Humanities and Social Sciences  
 University of Tsukuba  
 e-mail: masaru@jump.to